1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1



is going on in the world." "A few of us get small cooking stoves and others electric irons." Some also add, with a twinkle in their eyes, that since they can see after dark they do not have to go to bed so early and that the birth rate will probably drop.

Where there is no electricity there may be radio sets run by batteries. In one mountain village we found that five of the eight coffeehouses had battery receiving sets which they always turned on to the newscasts. "Why," we wanted to know, "are you villagers so interested in newscasts?" "Oh, we like to hear farm prices over the radio, but most of all we like news about what is going on in foreign countries because that is what enlightens us." In some of the most out-of-the-way villages we found receiving sets run by gas motors supplied by the United States Mission. Thus the air waves are reaching the village plateia and the villagers' sense of isolation gives way to a growing demand for more of the benefits enjoyed outside the village.

The water supply in the village is quickly identified by the procession of people to and from the springs, artesian well, or street faucets. A local gendarme in his trim gray uniform, who joins our group, and a field guard on his way to leave the rifle slung over his shoulder at the community-council office are expressions of services from the national or local government, as is the mailman who comes from the next largest center once a day, or perhaps three times a week.

Our observations of the people, public buildings, and available utilities are constantly interrupted by the liveliness of the eager conversation around the café table. Although the American visitor is not directly engaged, the topics sound so interesting and so close to the facts he is trying to collect that he cannot remain entirely aloof. For instance, the young officer in charge of some people recently resettled in the Greek-Albanian border area under his control says that the peasants are complaining because their land allotment is too small and the soil too sandy, so they go into the forbidden no-man's-land to cultivate even if they do place their lives in jeopardy; a man who prides himself on knowing local history affects a learned air when he tells the history of the local church, built on the site of an ancient pagan shrine; a child, bolder than the rest, comes up to ask the woman interpreter, who is wearing slacks, whether she is a man or a woman.

Again, in a low voice, a local official inquires politely: "Who is this American professor? What is he doing in our village?" When he is told that the professor is interested in understanding the Greek people, and in telling Americans about them, he finds it hard to believe. "You mean," someone asks, "that he has come all the way from America to visit our village? Please tell the professor that we are greatly honored." One man adds, "I've lived here sixty-seven years and during none of that time has a Greek professor ever come to visit us." A woman related to the coffee-

1:Sanders Z-5N (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1



earth-shaking political event would call forth a variety of opinions forcefully expressed.

A second attraction is drinking with one's friends. According to Photiadis:[1]

> The alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages tend to contribute to a considerable degree to the attraction of the coffeehouse, even though the men can drink all they want in their own homes. *Ouzo*, the alcoholic drink, is drunk only in the coffeehouse. When asked why they don't drink it at home and save money, they will answer that "*ouzo* is drunk only with good company."

It is interesting to remember what has already been pointed out: that a son is customarily supposed to visit a coffeehouse in which his father is not likely to be found. Although "times are changing," a breach of this custom throughout much of rural Greece would still be considered disrespectful. It may have some connection with the fact that a father, who is supposed to set a good example before his son, might find his storytelling or his convivial drinking dampened if a son were present. This is why, in village after village, where there are almost always three coffeehouses, one is favored by the old men, another by the middle-aged, and the third by the young people. Informants will say that the young people will go to their coffeeshop because one can listen to phonograph records, watch the girls pass by, or play noisy games that the older men might not tolerate. The real reason for differentiation may lie in the older traditions which originated in the men's desire to drink with their friends and equals. Photiadis in his study points out how the Greek peasant during his hours at work looks forward eagerly to the time of day when he can go "to the coffeehouse to meet his friends, have a few drinks, and continue this cycle again and again."

A third source of pleasure in the coffeehouse is the games. Playing for drinks is common with the loser paying for them. Very rarely do they play for money since it is prohibited by law. Sometimes they become involved in a game quite emotionally and when the game is over they eagerly look forward to the next meeting. A good card player is well-known and therefore is always surrounded by others watching him. Quarrels sometimes go along with the game. Characteristic is the sarcasm of the winner, or perhaps the participants, which tends to raise their emotions.

In addition to various kinds of card games, backgammon is commonly played. Once in a while one sees a chess game in progress.

A fourth and very important attraction of the coffeehouse is the availability of the recent newspaper and a radio. As Photiadis says:

> Non-farmers or part-time farmers stop to listen to the early news before they go to their work. During the day the older men sit for many hours in the coffeehouse listening to the radio. In the busy coffeehouse the early part of the eve-

[1] [Who described the Northern Greek village of Stravropolis - ANALYST]

1:Sanders Z-5H (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1



ning or the very late hours are the times when the people pay most attention to the radio. During the busy evening hours it is very difficult to listen to or enjoy the radio because of the noise the participants make.

The different outsiders who stop by the coffeehouse, particularly the most central and attractive one, bring news and diversion. The bus driver, a government official en route to some other village, a commission merchant after agricultural products or livestock, a stray American tourist, are links with the larger society. Frequently, some offhand remark by one such stranger, because it has the ring of authority, influences the opinions of those present and thereby the opinions of others in the village who receive the information secondhand. Not to be overlooked, of course, is the eye-witness report some fellow villager brings back from the city or a provincial town where he has gone to arrange a business or legal matter. More often than not he can hardly wait to get to the coffeehouse so that he can hold the spotlight as long as he can stretch out the account of what he saw.

These attractions do not begin to exhaust all the possibilities. Anyone with business to transact arranges to meet the other party or parties at a coffeehouse. One may also go to the same place for a haircut. In Kimine, all three of the coffeehouses have what passes for a barber shop in one corner. Since there is no partitioning, the barber chair, mirror, and all tonsorial activities are in full view of the coffeehouse patrons. The barber is particularly in his glory on Saturday and Sunday nights, when the coffeehouses are at their busiest. Likewise, in Anthili, in Central Greece, the three barbers there ply their trade in the coffeehouses, and so it is throughout most of rural Greece. Now and then one even comes across a singing barber who entertains when business is slack. Most coffeehouse proprietors consider him a prize asset.

## The Coffeehouse Clientele

But knowing what attracts the villagers to the coffeehouse does not tell us who is attracted and to what coffeehouses. Nor does it give us sufficient insight into the way community decisions are reached in the coffeehouse setting. For such information we need to take a closer look at the findings for Stavroupolis:

> Ninety percent of the adult males of the village visit at least one of the seven coffeehouses from time to time. Almost all of these go at least 1–2 days a month throughout the year, with about four fifths going an average of at least 1–2 days a week.
>
> More people go during the summer, but those who go during the winter go more often. Most people vary their frequency from winter to summer and those who change least are obviously those who go every day.
>
> Most people spend at least an hour whenever they go to the coffeehouse, but

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1



631 642 this is to be worked out puzzles Greek politicians as much as it does American politicians interested in United States counties, laid out in horse-and-buggy days and ill adapted to today's rapid-transit world. In any combination, one center will gain and the other lose, a fact which has local political repercussions in a democratic system. Some of these become apparent as one views the work of the community council and its president.

## The Community Council

● 207 In Phrangista, a mountain village of Central Greece, I was shaken out of pleasant contemplation as two loudspeakers on the village square suddenly began to inform one and all of the latest news of the day.

275 243 247 This was in the spring of 1953, and we were on a coffeeshop verandah newly made of concrete. Across the dusty thoroughfare, some hens had discovered wheat sheaves drying in front of the house of the carpenter; next door, potted geraniums were blooming in the window of a handsome stone house. We were shut in from the outside world by hazy mountains.

262 The proprietor's wife and daughter had just brought us preserved walnut sweets in a spoon with the traditional glass of water. One spooned the sweets, gulped the water, and commented on the good flavor of the walnuts

207 177 preserved before they had fully ripened. And then came the radio. These loudspeakers, sounding forth noon and evening, featured the broadcasts from Ioannina, Patras, and Athens. The radio, obviously much more powerful than the battery sets frequently encountered in the ordinary coffeehouse, aroused my curiosity. I turned to the president of the community

[422] council, who was sitting nearby. He told me that the radio was community-owned, that it had been placed there by the American Mission, and that it had "brought civilization" to that place. But the more I talked with him, the more I realized that bringing in civilization through this medium created some local administrative problems.

The American Mission, preferring to distribute the radio directly to the local authorities rather than through a regular government ministry, stipulated that the community would have to provide the gasoline for the motor which furnished the energy for the radio. So the first problem was to find the money to buy the gasoline, which cost a great deal by the time it was transported over the mountains from Lamia. A second problem was locating someone (in this case, two teen-aged boys) who could operate the complicated machine and tune in the radio. The president proudly reported that on the previous day a screw had worked loose and the program was temporarily interrupted — but only temporarily — for these competent youngsters quickly found the trouble and replaced the screw.

623 653 651 727 Before I left Phrangista, the president wanted me to see the church which the villagers had recently rebuilt. It had been completely and deliberately destroyed by the Nazis. The archbishop had given some funds for its res-

1:Sanders Z-5H (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1



councilmen could be elected in demes and from five to fifteen in communes, on the basis of population.

An account of local officialdom taken from almost any commune in Greece closely resembles that from other communes, although the number of council members may vary. Here are the facts for Gourie, near Mesolongi on the western coast of Greece.

The village has the following officers: a president and a deputy president, who replaces the former in his absence. The president is the paid governmental representative in the village. The secretary is a salaried, permanent employee of the community, whose duty is to keep all community records, conduct all correspondence, and do all other clerical work. The village council: it is the duty of this council to help the president solve the various community problems, to attend regular meetings and take the necessary resolutions. The councilmen are unpaid officers; the president is paid a yearly allowance of one thousand drachmas for his extra expenses. The council and the president were elected during the last national municipal elections. Later the president was elected by the councilmen.

The old school building is now used for the community office. This has two rooms; one is used for the president's office and the other for the secretary's; its furniture is very poor; it has six chairs, a divan, and a bookcase used for filing.[1]

Of course, villages differ in the facilities provided for the community-council officers. In Tsepelovo, an Epirus village, the office of the council was well furnished. Cushioned benches lined the walls. Other furniture included a long table at which the secretary worked; a storage chest; a glassed, built-in cabinet containing shelves for filing; four straight-back wicker chairs; and another cabinet built into the wall which contained a store of medical supplies. The room was decorated with an *Ohi* sign, commemorating the refusal by Metaxas to capitulate to the Italians early in World War II, pictures of the royal family, portraits of local dignitaries, and two pictures of Eisenhower. Some American Mission material lay on the long table. This council, too, had the responsibility of taking care of the high-powered American Mission radio, similar to the one in Phrangista.

As I talked with the village officials here and throughout Greece, I tried to understand their conceptions of their jobs. I knew what the law stated to be their functions but wondered how closely their own ideas corresponded with the legal description. In an Attica village (1953) I found a council consisting of eight members and the president. The secretary there, as elsewhere, had no vote at council meetings, but introduced the topics on the agenda. I asked this secretary whether he considered himself an employee of the community council or of the central government. In Communist countries to the north I had known that the secretary of local government was usually a trusted Communist imposed on the community and

1:Sanders Z-514 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1



eral ways, and one of the most interesting impacts this body made upon the villages was the program promoted by one of their officials, Glen Leet. It was termed *pronoia dia tes ergassias*, often translated "welfare through employment," which made it possible for villagers to work on some useful community project and be paid minimal wages for their labor. This not only brought some much-needed cash into poor areas but resulted also in actual physical accomplishments which people could see and in which they could take pride. This program, of course, was supplementary to the customary "voluntary" or unpaid labor (*prosopike ergassia*), usually ten days, which able-bodied villagers are supposed to contribute to the community upon call of the community council.[8]

Mention has already been made of a few efforts of the American Mission to Greece — whether called Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), Mutual Security Administration (MSA), Foreign Operations Administration (FOA), or International Cooperation Administration (ICA). One of these was the attempt to set up radio receiving sets in the most isolated Greek villages so the people there would feel in touch with the outside world; another was the vast road-building program which has left its mark not only upon the Greek countryside but upon the Greek social structure as well. Physical isolation has been broken down on a scale not dreamed possible in the prewar years.

The American Mission is also largely responsible for the speeded-up mechanization occurring in Greek agriculture in the 1950s. The same holds true for greatly expanded drainage and irrigation projects which increased the production of cotton and rice. To credit the American Mission with these and other developments does not reflect upon Greek ingenuity and desire for progress, for all of these programs were carried out by Greeks and through Greek agencies, but the outside financial and technical assistance had to be present for any large-scale success. A sober evaluation of American aid to Greece is found in a book by that title, written by A. A. Munkman, who was chief of Audits and Surveys of the United States Economic Mission to Greece.[9] While citing the positive achievements, he also inquires into how the two billion dollars supplied could have been better used for the benefit of the Greek people. He deals none too gently with some of the administrative weaknesses and concludes pessimistically that Western influence is steadily losing ground, because the ordinary Greek peasant or worker feels that it promises far more than it fulfills. This goes back, he thinks, to the fact that public opinion is poorly informed about the mechanics of aid.

Without necessarily taking issue with Munkman's conclusion, it is important to point out that, by their very nature, programs of planned change invariably raise peasant expectations beyond the sponsors' ability to satisfy. This need not be a negative fact if the dissatisfaction can be channeled into

2: Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) 463 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika



ushered into the *saloni* and are expected to remain there. At name day celebrations, at the *paniyiri*, at Christmas, at engagement and wedding parties, guests are greeted in the *saloni* and may be served food there. Most of the time it is an uninhabited room, but because it represents the family to the world outside and because the patterns of hospitality in the village often require a family to entertain without advance notice, its furnishings are the best in the house and the room is always kept clean and in good order.

A typical *saloni* in Vasilika has a large square table placed in the center of the room. The table-top is covered with an ornamental cloth, often snowy white. A glass bowl commonly occupies the center of the table. It is often filled with slightly yellowed photographs of members of the family and relatives living away from the village, and with the most recently received postcards or greeting cards.

Virtually every *saloni* contains one or two large trousseau trunks placed along the wall. Their tops are usually covered with an ornamental white cloth. These trunks serve as storage places for bed linens, table linens, extra sheets, pillow cases, and table covers, which were part of the wife's trousseau. They also are repositories for the trousseau being prepared for the daughters of the house. No matter how low the income level of the family, there are always at least some token *rukha* (linens) as dowry. Again, regardless of income, every housewife serves her guests fruit preserves in small crystal dishes and the liqueur which accompanies the preserves in tiny crystal glasses, and proffers both items on a tray.

A *saloni* may contain no other furnishings, but often the one bedstead owned by the family remains there to be used only by guests. If the family owns a wardrobe they may display it in the *saloni* and store their best clothes in it.

Wedding photographs of the husband and wife of the household, and of their parents or their married children are hung on the walls of the *saloni*. Additional framed photographs of relatives who no longer live in the village also decorate the walls. Often a large framed mirror hangs on the same wall as the photographs.

Approximately ten of Vasilika's families had battery-operated table radios in the *saloni* in 1955. Since the electrification of the village, additional families have purchased radios on the installment plan. By 1961 it had become customary to turn on Greek folk music programs during the midday meal and in the evenings. Since 1958 several families have purchased elaborate chandelier-like fixtures, holding two or three electric bulbs. These are placed above the center table of the *saloni*.

The terrace of the two-story house has a variety of uses. Here the family may perform some simple household task. The women may hang their wash on wires stretched along the poles which support a sheltering roof. Here, too, they may set the table for the Easter feast. The entire family may sleep out on the terrace in the heat of summer. Whatever else the terrace is used for, however, its edge is always lined with plants of various kinds, potted in whitewashed gallon tin cans. Some are flowering plants, but many are herbs, especially basil, which the women use in cooking. The villagers, men and women alike, are passionately